

CHAPTER 1

THE NAVY YEOMAN

Whether you have made the decision to strike for Yeoman (YN) or want more knowledge to perform your administrative duties better, this training manual (TRAMAN) is designed to help. Information from people surveyed throughout the Navy is used to set minimum standards of knowledge and skill needed to perform in each rating and paygrade. These are the Navy occupational standards (OCCSTDs). This TRAMAN is written to provide the knowledge needed to perform as a YN third or second class in a way that will encourage learning and provide a solid base from which you can grow professionally.

Review the OCCSTDs to get an idea of what this TRAMAN will teach you. Keeping them in mind as the course progresses will help you understand why information is included and where the information will lead you.

The word *Yeoman* has several definitions, but the best for our purposes is “an assistant.” Nearly every office in every command in the Navy will have a YN assigned. Ever since the day it was decided help was needed to keep things in order, YNs have existed. Duties have changed and branched out to other specialties, such as supply and pay, but the YN remains as a key person to organize and maintain communications for the department or division where assigned. The better you do your job, the better the whole organization will run.

To function well as a YN, you must understand how the Navy is organized and how each area functions and interacts with every other area. This goes along with the ability to administer and organize yourself, your job, your office, and eventually, the administrative functions of an entire

command. The knowledge you need to support this ability increases all the time. There are always changes and improvements to keep track of. The better you do that, the more effective you will be.

Your advancement to petty officer depends, in part, on your ability to take on the role of leader as well as to show specific knowledge of your job. You will be responsible to senior personnel for your own actions as well as the actions of those who work for you. The best way to meet this responsibility is to learn all you can, teach others, and set the example to be followed.

Don't forget, though, that you are a member of the armed forces. We are responsible to a much greater goal—the safety of our country and way of life. As such, we are sometimes called upon to fight for that security. As a YN aboard ship, you will be assigned to a general quarters station that will in some way be connected with maintaining communications during battle—as a phone-talker on the bridge, as a messenger for a damage control party, maybe as a status board writer in the combat information center (CIC). Remember the word *communicate*. Traditionally, and in fact, YNs are considered to be experts in communicating. We “pass the word” and through that act affect every aspect of naval life and operations. It's an important responsibility.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

As said before, YNs can be assigned to a large number of different offices. Despite the various areas each office oversees, administrative procedures are fairly constant. With a basic understanding of these procedures, you will fit easily into the routine of any office.

THE CAPTAIN'S OFFICE

Aboard ship one of the most important work areas for the YN is the captain's office. Here working under the ship's secretary, YNs control incoming and outgoing mail, maintain the ship's officers' service records, perform legal and disciplinary actions, and maintain the ship's master instructions and notices. The size of the ship determines the size and manning of the office. On larger ships, such as aircraft carriers, responsibility is split between other offices employing several YNs. There could be a separate legal/discipline office and possibly a separate office for classified material processing. On smaller vessels, there may be only one or two YNs in one office to do it all. Fortunately, the workload is smaller, even though the tasks are the same.

THE SHIP'S OFFICE

Ships generate a great deal of internal paper work and reports. To deal with this, the executive officer (XO) maintains the ship's office. The XO keeps track of reports, personnel functions, special services, and so on, and filters information to the commanding officer (CO). Generally, Personnelmen (PNs) are assigned to the ship's office, but on larger ships YNs may be assigned to handle the administrative workload.

OTHER OFFICES

Overall, though, central administrative offices are in the minority. Most offices are at the departmental and divisional level, such as the engineering logroom, the weapons office, and the operations office. Here you would be concentrating on correspondence, reports (muster reports, custody reports, and so on), helping with requisitioning, and, of course, maintaining the files and records of the division or department. The thing to keep in mind is, while the area of concern may be specialized, your administrative skills and knowledge will be the same.

OFFICE APPEARANCE AND ARRANGEMENT

The amount of control you will have over the physical conditions in your office will vary with the location and the type of duty to which you are assigned. Aboard ship and ashore, conditions outside your control may determine the kind of office and equipment you will have. Regardless of the conditions, however, you will be expected to take your share of the responsibility for the general appearance and neatness of your office. We will discuss more about the appearance of your office in the next paragraph and in the section pertaining to customer service. We want to point out your responsibilities for your office and how you should perform these duties as a routine part of your job—and not wait to be asked to perform them. Take the initiative yourself and carry out these duties.

NEATNESS AND CLEANLINESS

The general appearance of an office can be greatly affected by a simple practice such as putting things away from day to day. It will be one of your responsibilities to see that articles used during the day are put back where they belong. In securing your ship's admin office for the night, you should properly secure and store all gear and supplies to prevent damage to equipment or injuries to personnel from flying objects if your ship should encounter heavy weather. If you are serving ashore, it is no different—you should still put away articles and clean up your work area before you secure for the day.

Whether your office is ashore or afloat, you should go through your correspondence basket daily to see that work does not pile up. When you handle classified documents, be especially careful. After using classified documents, make sure you store them according to the guidelines set forth in the *Department of the Navy Information and Personnel Security Program Regulation*, OPNAVINST 5510.1.

Make sure all supplies such as ink and correction fluid that may stain other materials are put away properly. Do not leave any equipment on the desk that might be damaged when the office is cleaned. Avoid accumulations of loose papers or other objects that may create a fire hazard. Desks should be dusted frequently. Do not allow dirt to build up until field day.

In putting away things others have been using or in dusting someone else's desk, use care and good judgment so that you do not lose or misplace anything. Do not disturb the arrangements they have made of their papers.

ARRANGING YOUR DESK

Your own desk is one item for which you are always responsible. Arrange it in a manner that is neat and organized. Set the example for those individuals who are less organized than yourself.

The following suggested plan is suitable if you spend most of your time typing letters or other correspondence and forms. Your work may require that you provide space for other types of supplies, but the general principle will still apply.

- Keep pencils, erasers, paper clips, and other small articles in shallow drawers or trays.

- Insert slanted stationery trays in one of the upper drawers. Use a separate tray for each type of stationery or form. Place the most frequently used stationery or forms at the front, with the additional trays similarly containing forms according to frequency of usage.

- Keep carbon paper in its box to keep it from curling or from soiling the stationery.

- If you keep any personal belongings such as clothes in your desk, place them in a drawer away from public view.

- At the end of the day, clear everything possible from the top of your desk. You should straighten any articles that remain on top of your desk and close all drawers. Make sure all classified or sensitive material is properly stored.

OFFICE ARRANGEMENT

If you have an opportunity to arrange the furniture in your office, do some advance thinking and planning before you start moving it. You should place desks so that those who work at them will have enough light without having to face the light. Avoid arranging desks so that anyone's back is to the reception area. Everyone in the office should be in a position to see and assist customers. Also make sure there is enough working space for your office co-workers to move around.

Chairs should be adjusted so that typists' feet rest firmly on the floor and chair seats are at least 12 inches below the base of the typewriters. Think of the work that has to go on regularly and place equipment where it can be used most conveniently and where work will flow in one direction rather than in a crisscross manner.

You should place tables or counters conveniently for handling supplies or assembling papers. You should place files where they are handy for those who use them.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

So far we have talked about what a YN is. But, what do you need to know? The rest of this TRAMAN will provide information to teach you what is needed to function as a YN third and second class petty officer.

TYPING

Typing is, of course, a skill absolutely necessary, but it cannot be taught by just a book. To qualify for YN3, you must pass a performance test by typing 30 words per

minute and for YN2, you must type 40 words per minute. There are specialized typing textbooks available if you need to improve your typing skills. You should look for opportunities to practice in one of your command's offices. By showing a genuine desire to learn, you will get encouragement from the senior YNs in your command.

OFFICE MACHINERY

You will need to know how to operate the laborsaving devices available in offices today. These are copying machines, typewriters, word processors, and communications systems. All are being influenced by technological improvements, but basic procedures remain very much the same.

FILING

The Navy has a filing system based on standard number codes and standard procedures. The Navy is big, but if you learn the standard filing system, you will be able to function at any duty station anywhere with only a little orientation in local practices.

CORRESPONDENCE

As with filing, the same standardization applies to correspondence. Standard procedures keep information flowing effectively. You will learn the standard letter format, the business letter format, messages, memorandum formats, and variations. You will also learn to identify the proper circumstances for using the different types of correspondence.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

It cannot be repeated too often; YNs are communicators. Your language skills must be sharp. Your verbal skill and your writing skill must be above average. YNs are expected to keep an eye on what they are doing (remember, attention to detail). If you

are typing and find a grammar or spelling error or a format problem, you should tactfully point it out to the author and be ready to offer a substitute or correction.

FORMS

As in most large and diverse organizations, the Navy seems to have a form for everything. This is one of the prices of standardization. While there may be a large number of forms, you will find that once you have been introduced to them, how they are identified, and what they accomplish, it is fairly easy to keep them straight in your mind and know when they are needed.

PUBLICATIONS AND DIRECTIVES

There is a "trick to the trade" that all good YNs understand. A great deal of information can be stored in your memory, but it is impossible to know everything. The trick is to know where to find pertinent information. Once you become familiar with the Navy's publications and directives system, you will have all the answers available to you.

LEGAL

While all personnel are made aware of the *Uniform Code of Military Justice* (UCMJ) and legal and disciplinary procedures that affect them, you will get a much more detailed look at the paper work and processing involved in nonjudicial punishment (NJP) and other legal functions. Most commands are not large enough to have Legalmen (LNs) assigned, which puts the responsibility for complete and accurate records on the YNs assigned.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

As your career progresses there will be opportunities for specialization or career change. Navy Enlisted Classifications (NECs) and schools will be available to you during your career as a YN.

NAVY ENLISTED CLASSIFICATIONS

The NEC coding system identifies special qualifications based on an individual's education and/or experience. As a YN, you can qualify for two NECs. They are YN-2511, Court Reporter and YN-2514, Flag Officer Writer.

The court reporter NEC is earned through attendance at appropriate training schools. The court reporter sits at legal proceedings and must be able to record at 120 words per minute (wpm) with stenography (handwritten or machine) or at 200 wpm using voice recording equipment. This occupation requires extensive knowledge of the UCMJ and procedures found in the legal manuals of the Navy.

The flag officer writer NEC is given after completion of YN C school, which trains you to work on flag officers' personal staffs. The skill requirement is to take dictation by shorthand at a minimum of 90 wpm.

LEGALMAN

One career change that may be of interest later on is becoming an LN. Entry into that rating is at the E-5 or E-6 level after successful completion of the Naval Justice school. Conversion may be authorized for E-4; however, conversion is not effective until after successful completion of the Naval Justice school and an advancement in rate examination. LNs are assigned to naval legal service offices, on larger ships, and at most major shore commands,

SCHOOLS

The key to classification is training and schools. Information on qualifications can be found in section II of the *Navy Enlisted Manpower and Personnel Classification and Occupational Standards Manual*. Information on schools may be found in the Catalog of Navy Training Courses (CANTRAC).

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Do you know what is expected of you personally as a YN? You need more than technical knowledge. There are personal qualities with which you must be concerned. In almost any job you are assigned to, you will meet other people, in person or on the phone. Part of your responsibilities will be to provide them with whatever help you can. You may be in a customer service position as a receptionist for a command with many offices and functions. You will be expected to handle questions or refer them to the proper authority. You will be presenting the first impression of your place of work and influencing other people's attitudes in dealing with your command.

VOICE

The most important personal quality is your voice. Whether in person or on the phone, it is your primary means of communication—and always remember that YNs are communicators. Clear and concise speech habits accomplish more than you sometimes think. Unfortunately, proof of this is found through the use of bad speech habits. More problems are caused by unconcern for how we say things. Have you ever called somewhere and heard “Good morning siropsofficeYNFrostspeakingthisisnota secure linecanIhelpyou sir?” This is delivered while holding the phone with the shoulder, inserting paper into a typewriter, and listening to the supervisor read the plan of the day. All the necessary information has been given—but no one can understand it. Other problems that make conversations one-sided are volume (mumbling or talking too loud), lack of emphasis (you can use your voice to make a point by stressing important information), or a high-pitched, shrill voice. Also, learn to pronounce your words correctly. Local dialects can be confusing. Listen to others and use a dictionary to make sure you are saying words correctly.

Appearance goes hand in hand with your speaking skills. As a point of contact in your office, other people will come to you for information or answers. Your credibility will be greatly strengthened if you look clean-cut and squared away. People will anticipate competence from you and will be ready to listen to what you have to say.

ATTITUDE AND PERSONALITY

Your attitude toward your work goes far in making you a truly professional YN and it will have an effect on those you deal with. Since attitude is a frame of mind, it shows itself in different ways. Your personality itself will generally determine your overall attitude. By looking forward to working and dealing with other people, you will have that positive attitude others will notice. Likewise, if you are not happy with yourself or your position, you can be sure it shows also. Being a service member, your military bearing will be used as an indicator of what kind of worker you are and what your attitude is. Taking pride in your appearance and acting militarily correct to all others will improve working relationships in the office and with those who need your services.

A large part of military bearing comes from common courtesy in addition to the military courtesies and customs observed by fellow Navy members. Always put yourself in the shoes of the persons you are dealing with. Deal with them as you would like to be dealt with. In turn, they will respond to you positively.

How you perform in the office is another part of how you will be judged. Always think about the job you are doing—are you doing it right? Can it be done better or more efficiently? Paying attention to details will ensure a job is done right. There are always different circumstances influencing even the most routine task. You should always keep yourself thinking ahead, checking for the right answer to make sure you are right.

One trait that is looked for, required, and even demanded of a YN is honesty. You will be working in offices with sensitive and/or classified material. You will be put in positions of trust by the officers you work for. The information that you see, hear, or handle must not be discussed outside the office. It may be tempting to "show off" a bit to your friends about what you know that they don't know—but don't let that happen. Your personal integrity is one of the most important parts of being successful in your career and it is very much a concern of those you work for. The records you keep affect others' careers, their lives after the Navy, and become a part of the Navy's history. You must reject any attempts to falsify or change these records. You may be asked by a friend or offered bribes to do this. The answer is always no! No matter how small the act, you will be letting down your shipmates and the Navy and leaving yourself open to legal prosecution.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: THE ART OF DEALING WITH PEOPLE

As a YN, almost everything you do will involve dealing with people. In this section we will tell you about the importance of providing good customer service to all individuals regardless of their status. We will describe what can happen whenever you provide good (or bad) customer service and the effects you will have on the image of your office, your rating, your command, and the Navy as a whole. As a YN, you are one of the most important customer service representatives in the Navy. We will tell you about some of the ways in which you, the YN, can improve the customer service environment of your office so that your office can effectively provide the type of customer service Navy personnel need and deserve. We will talk about your role as a customer service representative and the ways in which your attitude, personal appearance, and pride in your job and yourself play a big part in providing good customer service. We will also tell you about some of the pitfalls you

must avoid so you can provide the type of service that your customers need and deserve.

EFFECTS OF FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

As a customer, have you ever waited in line only to be told when you finally reach the window, "Come back tomorrow. The person who takes care of that is not here today"? Have you ever tried to get a question answered and had the feeling that the person to whom you were talking resented being bothered? Have you ever walked into an office and waited and waited for service? Did you feel as though you were being ignored by office personnel who were just standing around? Did you notice that some of them realized that you were standing there waiting for service, but just looked the other way? Most importantly, have you ever acted toward a customer in an inappropriate manner, a manner that is not consistent with your professional responsibilities as a YN?

As you think about these questions are you convinced that there were some good reasons (not excuses) for these situations to happen? The Chief of Naval Operations is not, and a great many other individuals in the Navy, both juniors and seniors alike, are not.

Only a wishful dreamer would expect all Navy members to be 100 percent dedicated to their work, but only a confirmed pessimist would declare that the Navy is as good as it will ever be. There must be a point between these two extremes at which the problems and requests of naval personnel, their dependents, and of Navy employees can be and should be handled correctly, promptly, and courteously—a point at which members will be satisfied with the service they receive without reducing the efficiency of those providing the service.

Providing excellent customer service is the responsibility of everyone in the Navy. A few of the Navy's ratings, however, are

involved primarily with providing services directly to personnel. These ratings include AK, DK, DT, HM, LI, LN, MS, NC, PC, PN, RP, SH, SK, and YN. Although this chapter is intended for you, the YN, personnel in other ratings who are reading this TRAMAN can apply the same principles of providing good customer service while performing their jobs.

Think back to some recent contact you have had with one or more of the personnel service ratings. How would you rate the service you received? You are a member of one of these ratings. How do you think your service as a YN would be rated by those you have served?

Now, carry this one more step. What effect did this good or bad service from other people have on you? How would you respond to courteous treatment and efficient action as opposed to a "don't care" attitude?

YOUR ROLE IN THE ADMIN OFFICE

A customer seeking assistance in the admin office can still be given good service even though it may be impossible for you to provide the desired results. People may ask for things or services to which they are not entitled or for which you may not have the authority to approve or grant. In these cases, providing good customer service refers to the quality of service you can provide rather than whether or not you are able to comply with all the person's wishes. When a person seeks assistance in the admin office and you do not provide it or you give the person the "runaround," "fast shuffle," or a "don't bother me" response, you are relaying to this person any one of the following impressions about your attitude concerning his or her needs:

"You are not an important individual."

"Your request or problem is not important to me."

“You don’t know what you are talking about; I do!”

“I don’t care about your problems; I’ve got problems of my own.”

“I have more important things to do.”

“I am having a bad day today.”

The effect of bad service in an admin office is much more lasting than the momentary anger or disgust felt by the recipient. You can be sure the customer will remember you if you provided him or her with bad service. You can also be sure the customer will tell his or her friends about the bad service you provided. The frustration and resentment bad service can cause will stay with that person in the form of his or her general attitude toward the Navy.

On the other hand, good service contributes to a good attitude in a person. Good service is a qualitative and enviable characteristic that is indicative of a person’s human relations capabilities, knowledge, interest, and concern for others. These qualities are especially important for you, the YN. By providing good service you build excellent rapport between you and the customer. The Navy person who receives good service will remember you as being a professional customer service representative who is always willing and able to help. You can be sure this person will tell his or her friends about you and recommend you to them whenever they need to come to the admin office.

In your career, the importance of providing excellent service to Navy people cannot be overstated. Always strive to be professional and provide the best customer service possible to Navy members, regardless of their status.

Recognizing the Customer’s Needs

Everyone in the Navy has needs. People’s problems must often be met by someone else. As a YN, you will encounter many individuals who have a variety of needs. You most likely will know the answers to many of the problems or, if not, you will know where to find them. You have the key to the information chest that contains the facts you need to help a person seeking assistance. Recognize that the personal service requirements are not the same for everyone. The senior petty officer will come to you for service, but, because of his or her experience, will not require the same explanations, interpretations, or advice that a younger, less experienced member requires. Since the more experienced members are aware of the services to which they are entitled, they are less likely to accept poor service. Although all members depend on others for service, the greater need probably is felt by the young men and women serving their first enlistment.

Improving Your Contact Skills

To have a skill is the ability to do something well as the result of talent, training, or practice, or a combination of these. A multitude of skills comes into play in your day-to-day life—the professional skills of your rating, your military skills, and the skills you use in your off-duty activities.

We are concerned here with yet another type of skill, face-to-face skills. These are skills that enable you to deal effectively with people. Basically, these skills include the ability to listen attentively, effectively use eye contact, and work with and speak to every individual as a person and not as an object.

The structure of the Navy tends to foster an impersonal attitude in its members. We go where we are sent. We do what we are told.

Most of the decisions that affect our lives are made by people we never even see. This type of relationship does not involve face-to-face contact, but this is not the relationship that exists aboard ships or at shore stations. Here you are in face-to-face contact with the customer; here the relationship becomes personal.

It is because of this personal interaction that you are required to have face-to-face skills if you are to be an effective YN. Listen to the customer to understand his or her needs; speak to the customer in a way the customer understands; and make every effort to make sure the customer is satisfied.

Your effectiveness as the contact point depends on how well you listen, speak, and respond to the customer's needs and how well you acquire and use face-to-face skills.

Examining Your Attitudes

Our attitudes cannot be measured or graded, but the effects or results of our attitudes can be. The effects of our attitudes are apparent in our actions, words, and deeds. You may have said or heard someone else say, "That person has a bad attitude." What does this mean? How was this opinion formed? Was it formed as the result of the way that person has acted toward co-workers or customers, or as a result of not having completed his or her assigned work?

Why are we bothering to talk about attitudes? After all, people are people, and you cannot change human nature. This is not true! Human nature is constantly changing as attitudes change. How do attitudes change? First, it takes you to recognize that a need for change in attitude is desirable. Second, you have to do something about it or take appropriate action to make the change. Only you can do it. No other person can force you to change. Changing your attitude is just like setting goals for yourself; you must combine vision with action. It is like wanting to do

something, determining what needs to be done, and doing it.

ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER

Before we talk about the role of the customer, let's first consider the term customer. It is a familiar word, and all of us in the Navy are frequently considered to be customers. We often go to other offices for assistance. As customers, we always expect to be provided the very best possible service. In reality, we do not always receive the kind of service we deserve or expect from those serving behind the counter.

Your role as a customer is to be courteous, tactful, and respectful to the person providing assistance to you. When you make the person assisting you feel important, you are encouraging that person to be more aware of the expected service he or she needs to provide. If you feel that the person is not providing you with the assistance that you seek or expect, it is your responsibility to bring the matter to the attention of a more senior and knowledgeable individual, such as the person's supervisor. As the customer, you should never leave an office unsatisfied. You should leave that office feeling that you can always return at any time and be confident that they will provide you with the assistance you need. This is a realistic expectation.

Now, let's change your position from the person seeking assistance to that of the person behind the counter providing assistance. Just imagine how customers feel when they come to your office and they do not receive the help they need or deserve. Remember one thing, always put yourself in the customer's shoes. Think of how you, as a customer, would like to be treated. If you remember this, you will become a more conscientious YN and you will certainly try to provide the very best customer service possible. Take care of those who need help. If you do not have the answers, find out who does, and get the answers.

THE CUSTOMER'S FIRST IMPRESSION

Customers form first impressions about you and your office the very first time they come in for help. Therefore, it is important for you to create a positive, lasting impression. You may handle many customers in the course of a day. Remember that every customer deserves the same courteous treatment. Take care of each customer in a professional manner. The fact that you must handle many customers during the course of a day may affect your mood. If you are in a bad mood, the customer will sense it and feel very uncomfortable around you. Therefore, you should learn to control your moods and your temper.

If you feel that you cannot provide the service a customer needs because you are having a bad day, get someone else who will, and excuse yourself. This is in the best interest of you and the customer. A customer's impression of you will usually extend to the entire office. For example, if a customer has a particularly complicated problem, and you are able to help him or her solve it by looking up the applicable reference, the comment from the customer to shipmates might be "That YN3 John Doe in the admin office is on the ball." It is even more likely that the customer's comment will be "That admin office is on the ball. They solved my problem because they know what they are doing."

YOUR APPEARANCE

Just like your image, your appearance is the first thing the customer notices and uses to form an impression. You must look good, feel good, and act accordingly. It goes without saying that you should be in the prescribed uniform of the day. But this by itself is not enough. You should present not only a correct but also a neat appearance. Of course, no one is expected to look neat and

fresh at the end of a hard day. You can, however, start that way in the morning.

ANALYZING THE CUSTOMER

We have been analyzing your actions as the customer service representative so that you may see some reasons, within yourself, why you may not be providing as good a service as you are expected to do. To do this, we have assumed that the customer was in a good mood, had trust in your ability, and was willing to accept your solution. This is not always the case.

There are several factors that often stand between you and the customer. They can complicate the customer's problem and your efforts to provide a solution. In the following paragraphs, we will take a look at some of these barriers.

State of Mind

Regardless of the nature or seriousness of the customer's problem, certain negative factors may serve to complicate it. The customer may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Be angry, worried, or frustrated
- Lack confidence in your abilities
- Be unwilling to accept anything less than the desired solution to a problem

However, if you can recognize these factors and make appropriate allowances for them, you may avoid further complicating the customer's problem.

The customer who is emotionally upset (angry, worried, or frustrated) may have difficulty in stating a problem accurately or completely. Significant information may be omitted; opinions may be confused with facts; or there may be a feeling that the information you are requesting is too personal. Usually, it

will help if you can first determine the cause and target of the customer's emotional upset. What caused the anger? To whom is it directed? You may be able to sort out this information by asking leading questions.

The old adage "The customer is always right" is not true in all situations. Personal abuse is not a "right" of the customer. But, the customer who is allowed to "blow off steam" (within reason) may then become apologetic and ready to accept your help.

When you are faced with an upset customer, remember that your purpose is to serve that customer's needs. Any other response on your part that may cause the customer to become more irritated is not appropriate. Try to calm the customer down and maintain your self-composure. If you start shouting back because the customer has upset you, you will not be able to provide the service that the customer needs. If you feel that the customer has crossed the boundaries and is being verbally abusive to you, excuse yourself and bring the problem to the attention of your supervisor. Your supervisor has more experience in dealing with angry or irritated customers and will take whatever action is necessary to resolve the customer's problem.

A calm, confident manner is the best approach. When you do not respond with anger or rudeness to a customer's emotional outburst, you have taken the first step toward solving the customer's problem, whatever its nature.

Complicated Problems

Most of the customers will have rather routine, easily identifiable problems. These problems will not present any great difficulty. However, there are exceptions. To resolve a complicated problem, both the customer and you, the YN, must have a mutual desire to achieve results and take whatever appropriate action is necessary to solve the problem. The

problems you encounter that are beyond your control because of your lack of experience must be brought to the attention of a more knowledgeable individual, such as your supervisor, for appropriate action.

Your Response

Earlier we discussed your attitudes toward customers, but we were thinking about customers in general. It is not difficult to be pleasant when you are dealing with pleasant people. It may become more difficult when the person is unpleasant.

Occasionally, you will have a customer who just seems to rub people the wrong way. No matter how hard you try, you cannot remain pleasant or friendly because of the customer's attitude or manner of speaking. In this situation, it is usually best to keep the contact as impersonal as possible. Ignore the person's manner and attitude and concentrate on the problem. It will be difficult, but it can be done.

Your performance will be viewed by the customer, your co-workers, and your supervisor. If you are to do your best work, as rated by them, you must maintain your self-control. When patience runs out and tempers flare, your ability to think and act properly is greatly reduced. Be a professional customer service representative and think before you act.

PITFALLS TO AVOID IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

In the previous section we discussed why a good attitude is important to customer satisfaction. We will now talk about some specific mistakes YNs can make in their handling of customer needs. For the most part, these mistakes will tend to result from any attitudes you project toward the customer, the customer's problem, the Navy, your job, or yourself.

LEAPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Leaping to a conclusion means that, in your opinion, you already possess sufficient facts upon which to base your judgment. As a result, you end up ignoring additional information provided by the customer. This tendency is often caused by a lack of concern for the customer and the desire to end the contact as quickly as possible. It may also occur because you normally have a better knowledge of your field than does the customer, and you may assume that you know the customer's need before it is completely expressed.

If a customer has a vague idea as to the nature of a problem, you should not jump to conclusions. This does not help the customer. You should use tactful, skillful questioning to properly identify what the customer is trying to tell you.

PERSONAL REACTIONS

Occasionally, you may experience an adverse reaction to a customer—to his or her appearance, speech, or attitude. Because of your reaction, you may not be able to provide the quality of service that the customer needs or deserves. Most often, the cause of your adverse reaction will be the customer's attitude. When the customer is overbearing, cynical, or has a smart mouth, it may be difficult for you to maintain a professional manner. Nevertheless, you must remain professional. Customers who have bad attitudes are also individuals who deserve the same courtesy and respect as nice and courteous individuals.

You must also be aware of your feelings regarding a previous episode in which you had to deal with a difficult customer. You will remember the customer who gave you a rough time on a previous visit. Do not let this memory affect your response when you are called upon again to serve this customer. Showing your feelings may give you some

temporary gratification, but it will not solve your problems with this customer and it will have an adverse effect on your performance.

STEREOTYPING

Stereotyping is forming a standardized, oversimplified mental picture of members of a group. Stereotyping involves a fixed or general pattern that is attributed to the members of a particular group—disregarding individual, distinguishing qualities or characteristics. In stereotyping, we form mental pictures of people, things, and events according to the classification or group in which we feel they belong.

Consciously or unconsciously, we may have gone to a lot of effort to build up these stereotypes in our mind to make it easier to classify people. Some of these stereotypes may carry such labels as race, nationality, sex, religion, length of hair, and many others. Stereotyping eliminates the need for us to know the person as an individual. How convenient it is to have these ready-made niches in which we can place the person and thereby “know all about them.” But what an injustice this is! This implies that the person is no different from anybody else in the same group or category. This in itself is bad enough, but it is even more offensive when that person is placed in a category that we regard as inferior, and we, in turn, reflect this opinion in our attitude toward the customer.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

There are several types of language barriers that interfere with effective communications. Some are cultural, some are physical, some are habit, and some are just intended to confuse you. The barrier may exist because of the customer, you, or both.

The first two barriers—cultural and physical—are the most difficult for the speaker to overcome. Persons for whom English is a second language often have

difficulty with pronunciation, meaning, and sentence structure. English is considered to be one of the most difficult languages to learn (words that sound alike have completely different spellings and meanings and words with similar spelling are pronounced differently). You cannot change the English language, but there are ways you can help your customer to overcome this barrier. First, you must listen very carefully to what the customer is saying. The best way to do this is by being honestly concerned. Next, be absolutely sure you know the nature of the need or problem. Then, carefully phrase your questions so that you use relatively simple words and ask only one thing at a time. By first determining the nature of the problem, you can then gain additional information by asking questions.

The customer who has difficulty speaking English may also have trouble understanding it. When it is apparent that the customer is having difficulty understanding, you should speak more distinctly and, in most cases, more slowly. You can usually tell by the customer's expression whether or not you are being understood.

Speech impediments, such as stuttering or lisping, can also cause misunderstanding. In cases such as these, your problem will be understanding the speaker's words rather than the speaker's choice of words.

We have been speaking of language barriers as though they exist only on the part of the customer. This is not always the case. Language barriers also exist with customer service representatives. If you have a language barrier, your first step is to be aware of it. Your next step is to make a conscious effort either to eliminate it or to compensate for it. To compensate for a language problem, try to speak slowly and give the listener time to follow and interpret what you are saying. Be sure to ask questions and encourage your customer to do the same.

Some speech patterns that interfere with understanding are not impediments but just habits. Some of these speech habits are slurred pronunciation, running words together, speaking too fast, an exaggerated drawl or brogue, and profanity. Again, these are not physical impediments or intentional barriers; they are just habits. You should analyze your own speech patterns and determine whether or not you need to improve your manner of speaking. It is possible that you may have one or more of these habits. Normally, we do not listen to our own speech, but you can obtain a reasonably accurate sample of your speaking voice if you record an informal conversation and then listen to it carefully. Speech habits are not too hard to change, but you must first be aware of the habits you need to change.

The final barrier is most often set up by you, the YN, through the use of slang, technical terms, and acronyms that may confuse the customer. Although you will routinely use these terms and acronyms among your co-workers, your co-workers are already familiar with this language. You should remember that these words or expressions are not appropriate when your customers may not be familiar with them. If you must use technical terms, you must explain what they are as you refer to them in your conversation. Remember that customers from other ratings are not as well informed about your rating and work as you are. Therefore, you must remember to speak to your customers in terms that they can understand. Periodically ask the customer if he or she understands. If the customer does not understand, ask your customer to tell you what he or she does not understand and repeat yourself in simpler terms, if appropriate.

AMIALE RUNAROUND

The emphasis on being friendly to the customer is a means to an end—not an end in itself. You must also provide good customer service. You do not have the choice of

providing either the friendly atmosphere or the good service—you must provide both.

When a friendly, helpful atmosphere is encountered at the contact point, the customer is put at ease and may be able to state the problem more accurately. Then you are expected to take constructive action to help the customer correct his or her problem. But, some customer service representatives think that their job is to keep the customers smiling and get rid of them as soon as possible. True, the customer goes away happy, but the happy attitude will not last. Sooner or later, that customer will have to return because nothing was done about the problem. You can bet this customer will not be in a good frame of mind.

In helping people, you will discover that a considerable amount of time and effort is required to deal with some customers' problems or needs. In such instances, you may decide that it will be easier for you if you convince the customer that no action is really necessary. But this response will have an even worse effect than denying the service to the customer because you are, in fact, denying the reality of the customer's problem. If a customer requests and is entitled to a service, it is your responsibility to provide it. When you can say to a customer, "It's all taken care of," you are promising that person that all necessary actions have been completed. This is a good response if it is the truth. If it is not true, you have done a disservice—not a service—to your customer, your office, your rating, and the Navy. Have you ever said to a customer, "Yes, everything is taken care of" when in fact it was not? If so, you should realize that this is a bad way of doing business. Remember, you should be both tactful and truthful when you deal with your customers.

GOING BEYOND YOUR REALM

If you seldom make a mistake, you may find it difficult to understand why other

people frequently make more mistakes. Mistakes can result from many different situations. For example, heavy workloads, inexperienced personnel, unfamiliar situations, and carelessness can all contribute to the likelihood of errors. Errors may disappear, but they do not go away. The problem with all errors is that they must be corrected—often at some later date, at a different command, or by someone else. When you have to correct an error that someone else made, you will be tempted to "sound off" about the person who made the mistake. But whether or not you express your feeling, you must spend the same amount of effort to correct the error. It is proper to tell your customer that a mistake was made and explain the conditions—where and when—the error was made. Although you may feel embarrassed to explain to your customer that a mistake was made by your office, you nevertheless must do this as soon as the problem is identified. Appropriate steps must be taken to correct the problem immediately. If the problem was made by another office, correct it promptly. In both cases, there is no need to "cry over spilled milk." Just correct the problem.

Another area in which we sometimes overstep our bounds is expressing criticism or disapproval of official Navy policy, command policy, and divisional procedures and instructions. You do not have to agree with all of them. In fact, discussing them among your co-workers can have positive results—a change in procedures, a better flow of information, a better understanding of policy, or the improved ability to help the customer. Expressing your adverse opinion about them to the customer, however, serves no good purpose. When a customer requests something that must be denied because of current policy or regulations, frustration and resentment are natural reactions. If you express your disapproval or criticism of this policy or regulation, it only serves to increase the feeling of resentment or frustration in the customer. You have not helped. You have just made it harder for the customer to accept

the inevitable answer. On the other hand, if you know the policy is a temporary matter, or if you have reason to believe a change may be coming out soon, it is permissible (in fact, it is desirable) for you to explain this so that the customer may renew the request later.

You may have some customers whose problems are only imaginary. They want to complain about their petty officers, duty assignments, working conditions, or the holes in their pants. In these situations, you must maintain a very careful balance. You should not refuse to hear them out. There should be a point, however, when you must politely tell them that you wish you could stay there and listen, but that you have some important work to do.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have tried to acquaint you with the general requirements of the YN rating. We have mostly described how important it is for you to provide good customer service to all individuals. We stressed that if you have a good attitude and pride in your job and in yourself, these

qualities will contribute to your ability to provide good customer service. Remember, if you are providing good customer service right now, the Navy appreciates it and thanks you for your efforts. Remember also, that there is always room for improvement. The most important thing you should get out of this chapter is that you should put yourself in the customer's shoes. Ask yourself, "How do I want to be treated?" In answering this question, you will most likely say, "Well, I always want to be treated with courtesy and respect." You see, that is just how all customers want to be treated—with courtesy and respect. You should always treat customers the way you would want to be treated.

Now you have a broad idea of what a YN is, what a YN does, and what is expected of you. Keep this in mind as you take this course. As in most things, you can be good, mediocre, or bad at what you do, and rewards are given accordingly. A trusted YN that gains and holds the confidence of seniors can be in a position to influence command actions and attitudes much more so than other ratings in the same paygrade. A good YN doing a good job stands out above all others.

